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February 28, 1979

Mr. Donald G. Lanning
15429 S. Studebaker
Norwalk, Cal. 90650

Dear Mr. Lanning:

I refer to your letter of January 17, 1979 concerning some additional questions that you had concerning the Jonestown tragedy. Mr. Bushnell is currently out of the country and asked that I reply to your letter.

Frankly, I disagree with your contention that the Department's reply to Senator Cranston was designed to mislead the American public. The information given to Senator Cranston was a factual response to your initial inquiry. The entire Jonestown operation was covered extensively by all elements of the media in the United States and I believe at this time there are few people in this country that are unaware of this tragedy and how and why the Government reacted as it did.

Fortunately, a situation such as Jonestown only happens once in a generation and that is why decisions were made on an "ad hoc" basis. I am sure that you are now aware that the Department of Justice has filed suit in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco to recover 4.2 million dollars from the People's Temple to reimburse the Government for its expenses in this operation. If you wish additional information about this suit, I suggest you contact the Crimminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C.

The decision that was made to return the bodies has precedence. You may recall the air disaster that occurred several years ago in Tenerife in the Canary Islands when a Pan American Airliner collided with a KLM airliner on the runway and over 350 Americans were killed. Because of the magnitude of disaster our military returned the deceased to this country.

Normally our criteria in these instances is to resolve [illegible] problems and then seek reimbursement so [illegible] our citizens are served.

[illegible] questions about this [illegible], please let me know.

Sincerely,

Richard A. McCoy
Office of Caribbean Affairs

17 Jan 79

Mr. John Buchanan
Dept of State
Bureau of Inter American Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Sir:

I recently wrote to Senator Cranston expressing my opinion that we tax payers should not bear the expense of returning the nearly 1000 dead members of the People's Temple to Delaware. I suggested that a lien be placed against the properties (including cash and/or bank accounts) of the sect.

Senator Cranston's answer failed to address my specific suggestion, but it quoted from your Department's position statement regarding the "Guyana Tragedy", indicating that "the Dept of Justice is fully exploring possible legal remedies". He also enclosed a copy of that same position statement.

Though the entire Dept of State statement I could only see politician's statement which usually either soothe a questioning citizen and preclude

further questions or make the question seem "substantially less" as regards hard cash; and appeal to the readers humanitarian instincts — again hoping to preclude additional questions.

Please advise me as to exactly what steps have been taken and what additional steps are actually going to be taken to assure that the religious sect, Peoples' Temple bears all or as much as possible of the "substantially less than $8 million" expense of the handling and transfer of the dead at Jonestown.

I am not exactly heartless, but I feel there is a limit to the free money that the tax payers are willing to see thrown around. Since I started this incident to ask questions about, I really expect answers, not platitudes. I will continue to question unreasonable waste of my tax dollars as I become aware of them. So you shouldn't feel that I am concentrating on this one act.

Sincerely,
Lowell Holmes Jr.